

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image storage comprising:

5 a memory that stores a plurality of digital image data provided by a plurality of image providers;
a recorder that records the history of use by a plurality of image users with respect to each of the digital image data; and
10 a controller that controls a condition for each image provider in storing the digital image in accordance with the recorder.

2. The image storage according to claim 1,
15 wherein the condition for each image provider is the number of the digital image data that the image provider is entitled to store in the memory.

3. The image storage according to claim 1,
wherein the recorder is designed to record the number
20 of orders from the image users for each of the digital image data.

4. The image storage according to claim 3,
wherein the controller is designed to control the
25 condition for each image provider in accordance with the number of orders in a predetermined period for the digital image data stored by the image provider.

30 5. The image storage according to claim 4,
wherein the condition for each image provider is the number of the digital image data that the creator is entitled to store in the memory.

35 6. The image storage according to claim 5,
wherein the controller is designed to increase the number of the digital image data for the image provider if the number of the order for the digital image data

of the image provider increases.

7. The image storage according to claim 5,
wherein the controller is designed to decrease the
5 number of the digital image data for the image provider
if the number of the order for the digital image data
of the image provider decreases.

8. The image storage according to claim 1,
10 further comprising a searcher that searches the memory
for digital image data fulfilling a given condition
set on the history recorded by the recorder.

9. The image storage according to claim 8,
15 wherein the given condition is set on the number of
orders from the image users for each of the digital
image data recorded by the recorder.

10. The image storage according to claim 9,
20 wherein the given condition is that the number of
orders for the digital image data is greater than a
given number, whereby a popular digital image data
fulfils the condition.

25 11. The image storage according to claim 9,
wherein the given condition is that the number of
orders for the digital image data is less than a given
number, whereby an unappreciated digital image data
fulfils the condition.

30 12. The image storage according to claim 8,
wherein the given condition is set on the image
provider with the condition in storing the digital
image.

35 13. The image storage according to claim 12,
wherein the given condition is that the number of the

digital image data that the image provider is entitled to store in the memory is greater than a given number, whereby a digital image data provided by a popular image provider fulfills the condition.

5

14. The image storage according to claim 12, wherein the given condition is that the number of the digital image data that the image provider is entitled to store in the memory is less than a given number, whereby a digital image data provided by a fresh image provider fulfills the condition.

10

15. The image storage according to claim 1 further comprising printed matter production system that makes use of the digital image data in the memory for a production of printed matter.

1

16. The image storage according to claim 15, wherein the printed matter production system includes an acceptor that accepts from an image user a designation of a set of digital image data for an order of printed matter.

17. The image storage according to claim 16, wherein the printed matter production system further includes a selector that selects a type of printer suitable for individual production of the printed matter.

2

18. The image storage according to claim 15, wherein the printed matter production system includes a proposer that proposes a plurality of optional digital image data for selection by a plurality of potential image users for calendar, an acceptor that accepts the selections by the potential image users, and a decider that decides to realize a mass production of printed matter in accordance with the accepted

10

卷之三

selections.

19. The image storage according to claim 18,
wherein the printed matter production system further
5 includes a selector that selects a type of printer
suitable for mass production of the printed matter .

20. The image storage according to claim 1
further comprising a selector that selects one of a
10 plurality of types of printers for producing a print
of a digital image data in accordance with an order
from an image user.

21. The image storage according to claim 20,
15 wherein the selector is designed to select the printer
between a first type of printer suitable for
individual production of the print of a digital image
data and a second type of printer suitable for mass
production of the print of the digital image data in
20 accordance with the number of orders for producing
prints of the digital image data from the image users.

22. A method of facilitating the circulation of
digital image data stored in a memory comprising the
25 steps of:

storing digital image data of a plurality of
image providers in the memory;
informing a plurality of image users of the
digital image data;
30 accepting orders from an image user for a digital
image data;
recording the history of the order for each
digital image data; and
controlling a condition for each image provider
35 in storing the digital image in accordance with the
history of the order for the digital image data of the
image provider.

23. The method according to claim 22, wherein the condition for each image provider is the number of the digital image data that the image provider is entitled 5 to store in accordance with the number of orders accepted in a predetermined period for the digital image data of the image provider.

24. An image storage comprising:
10 a memory that stores a plurality of digital provided by a plurality of image providers;
a recorder that records the history of use by a plurality of image users with respect to each of the digital image data; and
15 a searcher that searches the memory for a digital image data fulfilling a given condition set on the history recorded by the recorder.

25. The image storage according to claim 24,
20 wherein the given condition is set on the number of orders from the image users for each of the digital image data recorded by the recorder.

26. The image storage according to claim 25,
25 wherein the given condition is set on a relationship between the number of orders for the digital image data and a given number, whereby a digital image data is searched for depending on the popularity of the digital image data.
30

27. The image storage according to claim 24,
wherein the given condition is set on the image provider with the condition in storing the digital image.
35

28. The image storage according to claim 27,
wherein the given condition is set on a relationship

between the number of digital image data that the image provider is entitled to store in the memory and a given number, whereby a digital image data is searched for depending on the popularity of the image provider who 5 stores the image.

29. An image storage comprising:
a memory that stores a plurality of digital image data provided by a plurality of image providers;
10 a recorder that records the history of use by a plurality of image users with respect to each of the digital image data; and
15 a selector that selects one of a plurality of types of printers for producing a print of a digital image data in accordance with an order from an image user.

30. The image storage according to claim 29, wherein the selector is designed to select the printer 20 between a first type of printer suitable for individual production of the print of a digital image data and a second type of printer suitable for mass production of the print of the digital image data in accordance with the number of orders for producing 25 prints of the digital image data from the image users.

31. A method of producing printed matter from a plurality of digital image data stored in a memory comprising the steps of:
30 storing a plurality of digital image data in the memory;
proposing a plurality of optional digital image data for selection by a plurality of potential image users for printed matter ;
35 accepting the selections by the potential image users; and
deciding on a mass production of printed matter

in accordance with the accepted selections.

32. The method according to claim 31, further comprising a step of informing the potential image users of preparatory proposals of the digital image data and a step of hearing responses thereto from the potential image users, the proposing step being conducted in accordance with the responses.

10 33. The method according to claim 31, wherein a plurality of groups of digital image data are proposed in the proposing step, and wherein selections of one digital image data from every group are accepted in the accepting step.

15 34. A method of producing printed matter from a plurality of digital image data stored in a memory comprising the steps of:

20 storing a plurality of digital image data in the memory;

proposing a plurality of groups of optional digital image data for selection by a plurality of image users for printed matter ;

25 accepting the selections of one digital image data from every group by each image user; and

producing printed matter for each image user in accordance with the selections, respectively.

30 35. A method of producing printed matter from a plurality of digital image data stored in a memory comprising the steps of:

storing a plurality of digital image data in the memory;

35 proposing a plurality of groups of optional digital image data for selection by a plurality of image users for printed matter ;

accepting the selections of one digital image

PCT/JP2007/052050

data from every group by each image user;
informing each image user of the total result of
the selections by the image users; and
allowing each image user to change the selection
in view of the informed total result.

36. A printed matter producing system
comprising:

a container including a plurality of groups of
sub-containers each keeping a plurality of sheets of
print produced on one image source, respectively;
a selector that selects one sheet from a sub-
container of every group, respectively, the option of
the sub-container among every group being depending
on an order by an image user for printed matter ; and
a binder that binds the selected sheets into
printed matter .

37. A method of producing a product from a
plurality of elements comprising the steps of:

proposing a plurality of optional elements for
selection by a plurality of potential users;
accepting the selections by the potential users;
and
deciding on a mass production of the product in
accordance with the accepted selections.

38. The method according to claim 37, wherein a
plurality of groups of elements are proposed in the
proposing step, and wherein selections of one element
from every group are accepted in the accepting step.

39. A method of producing a product from a
plurality of elements comprising the steps of:

proposing a plurality of groups of optional
elements for selection by a plurality of users;
accepting the selections of one element from

every group by each user; and
producing a product for each user in accordance
with the selections, respectively.

5 40. A method of producing a product from a
plurality of elements comprising the steps of:
 proposing a plurality of groups of optional
elements for selection by a plurality of users;
 accepting the selections of one element from
10 every group by each user;
 informing each user of the total result of the
selections by the users; and
 allowing each user to change the selection in
view of the informed total result.

15 41. A data storage comprising:
 a memory that stores a plurality of digital data
provided by a plurality of providers;
 a recorder that records the history of use by a
20 plurality of users with respect to each of the digital
data; and
 a controller that controls a condition for each
provider in storing the digital data in accordance
with the recorder.

25

109200-7207500